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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

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4 AUG 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs

Attorney General

Deputy Secretary of Defense

Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs

SUBJECT: IDEALIST Program

In December 1969, the President approved continuation of the IDEALIST Program through FY 1971 and directed the 40 Committee to review the project again prior to consideration of the FY 1972 budget. Since budgetary planning for FY 1972 is now underway, I suggest this issue be placed on the Committee agenda in the near future.

The attached memorandum, which has been coordinated with the NRO, summarizes the pertinent facts about the program and the questions that need to be addressed.

Rich
Richard Helms
Director

Attachment:
As Stated

NRO review(s) completed.

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Copy 1 of 23

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant to the President for National
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Attorney General

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Under Secretary of State for
Political Affairs

Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: IDEALIST Program

1. In December 1969, the President approved continuation of the IDEALIST Program through FY 1971 and directed the 40 Committee to review the project again prior to consideration of the FY 1972 budget. To assist in this review, information is provided herein on the current status and capabilities of the program.

The IDEALIST Program

2. The CIA IDEALIST Program provides a means of mounting "covert" reconnaissance flights by the improved U-2's in times of crisis or in areas where cloud cover inhibits satellite coverage. The IDEALIST fleet is postured to react rapidly to world-wide contingencies and without attribution to direct U.S. Government sponsorship. Its aircraft have a high expected survivability over China and most potential crisis areas.

3. Present IDEALIST operational assets consist of six U-2R aircraft at two permanent bases. One detachment is at Edwards Air Force Base, California, with four aircraft;

All aircraft are maintained in an operationally ready posture. Both bases have a capability for world-wide deployment and an aircraft can be over its mission target in about 50 hours after alert. The IDEALIST U-2R is also certified for operations from selected U.S. aircraft carriers. In order to reduce political risks that might be associated with overflight of sensitive areas, the CIA maintains

25X1

25X1

25X1

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Page 2

5. The following information summarizes the capabilities of specific IDEALIST Program assets:

a. Photographic Systems: The "H" Camera System can cover an area from 225 to 1370 nm in length. It can be used in vertical or oblique positions. The "H" achieves [redacted] resolution vertical and, standing off from the target, three foot resolution at 25 nm, and, depending on atmospheric conditions, up to eight feet or so at 50 nm. IRIS II system can acquire 2100 to 3600 nm linear coverage, a 60 to 70 nm lateral coverage, and a [redacted] vertical resolution.

c. Aircraft Survivability:

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25X1
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Page 3

25X1

25X1

(2) Thus the survivability of the U-2R flying over mainland China is high. The Mig has little capability against it - as was demonstrated when a Chicom Mig-21 attack was successfully evaded last October - and the known SA-2 sites can be avoided by proper flight planning.

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(3) On the other hand, the survivability of the U-2R is decreased over countries with a dense SAM deployment

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The Issue

6. The issue before the Committee is whether this quick-reaction and plausibly deniable surveillance system for foreign areas is worth maintaining as an option for those future contingencies which cannot be accommodated by our satellites, either because they happen not to be in orbit at the right time or because cloud cover inhibits coverage. In making this judgment, the Committee must take note of the fact that there are

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25X1

25X1

Page 4

two other systems which are also available for use for any such contingency; namely, the SR-71, and the TAGBOARD drone (the subsonic drone is too vulnerable to be considered a competitor except for very select areas).

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Both have some important capabilities which the U-2 does not have:

a. Both fly higher and faster than the U-2 and are therefore considerably less vulnerable to any given defensive environment.

b. The TAGBOARD drone may offer less political risk in some situations than an aircraft manned by a U.S. pilot.

On the other hand the U-2 aircraft, whether operated by the CIA or the Air Force, has a unique performance advantage over the TAGBOARD and SR-71:

a. The maneuverability of the U-2 and the characteristics of its sensors gives it an advantage in certain situations, particularly for target arrays of irregular conformation. Also, the flexibility of its payload and its ability to be airborne for long periods allows it to perform special missions

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In addition to this performance capability, the CIA managed IDEALIST U-2 provides one additional advantage, namely:

a. The ability to launch a mission quickly from foreign bases, allowing a political and operational flexibility not presently possible with either the SAC U-2 or the SR-71.

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One of the questions before the Committee is whether this unique characteristic is sufficiently important to pay the cost necessary to maintain it.

7. To isolate the various costs involved, the NRO has studied a number of possible combinations of the SAC and CIA fleets, as represented below:

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<u>Mode of Operation</u>	<u>Annual Cost</u>
a. Continue current split fleet operation (fly 12 aircraft, 6 in each fleet)	
b. Continue split fleet (fly 10, 5 in CIA, 5 in SAC)	
c. Consolidate under SAC (fly 10)	
d. Consolidate under CIA (fly 10)	
e. Consolidate under SAC (fly 7)	
f. Consolidate under CIA (fly 7)	

Thus, if one is willing to accept a lower mission capability, it is possible to reduce the number of aircraft and combine the fleets under one operator. Comparing the various combination-reductions shows that whatever the total number of aircraft deemed necessary to preserve the ready availability of U-2 performance advantages, the cost associated with maintaining the special characteristics derived from CIA management is per year, depending on the mode of operation chosen.

9. In summary, then, the specific questions that need to be addressed are these:

- What is the likelihood that the IDEALIST U-2's will be used for contingency reconnaissance, overflight or peripheral, in the foreseeable future?

25X1

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25X1

25X1

Page 6

25X1

b. Is this probability of use sufficiently high to justify the cost [] that is required to keep the IDEALIST capabilities available?

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e. If the answer to either the second or the third question is affirmative, is it essential for the CIA to continue the program or could SAC plan to maintain a world-wide contingency readiness using foreign bases []

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CARL E. DUCKETT

Director, CIA Reconnaissance Programs

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